

# Indian Dictionary



Bronne

## Introduction

---

There is nothing that gives so complete an insight into the peculiarities of Indian thought as does their universal sign language.

The different uses of picture writing among the Indians are many. While a great amount of it appears as mere decoration, there is, in every case, a meaning, however hidden it may be by the complication of the design. It was that old and characteristically human desire to astonish strange and remote human beings by portraying the extraordinary, some secret one knew, some strange thought or even one's own name, so that long after one had ceased to exist it might strike upon the sight and mind of another reader.

The American Indians were not the first to use ideographs as a means of recording ideas. Men of ancient times left their messages. The Egyptians, the Chinese, and also the Mayas used picture writing or the ideographs.

The Art of the American Indian has been conspicuous by its simplicity. He never painted the likeness of a man or animal, but always the symbol in a conventional style. Picture writing was expressed in the same way—a direct appeal to the imagination.

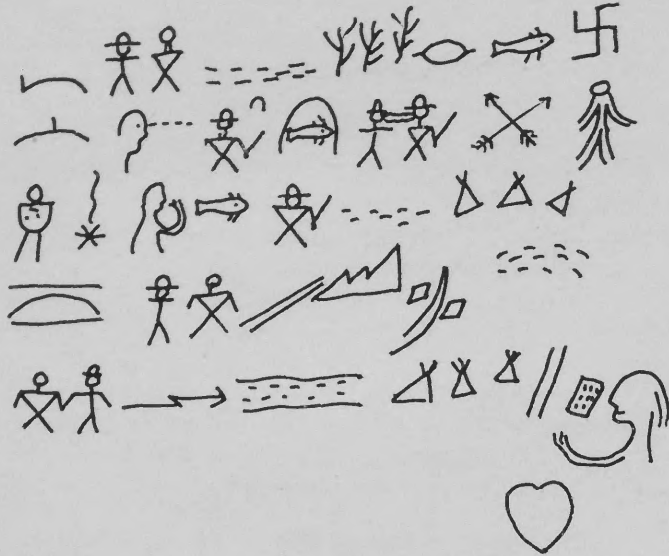
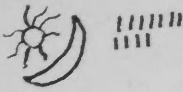
The word signs presented in this brief outline are but a very small part of the ideographic characters used by the plains tribes. Only those that are easily applied to present day usage have been selected. These are of both ancient and modern origin and have been compiled from authentic works and the personal observation of the author.

It would be possible to excite some real interest among ones friends by writing a letter with these ideographs, including the dictionary, by the use of which the recipient would be able to translate the message.

M. M. BROWNE,  
"АКНІКОКА."

P. O. Box 1752  
Casper, Wyoming

## Translation of Sample Letter



July 11.

This morning Jim and I went for a long walk. We followed a trail that took us through many pine trees and to a beautiful lake. This looked like a good place to fish and we did have wonderful luck.

About noon we see a man on horseback coming our way. By his uniform we know that he is a ranger so we hide the fish we have caught. Jim and the ranger talk in a very friendly manner and he tells Jim that we need not be afraid that it is all right for us to fish there. We build a camp fire and cook and eat the fish for lunch. The ranger returns to his camp. With a clear sky Jim and I take a long trail up a mountain and through a canyon. Clouds appear in the sky and we go like lightning down the road to our camp and rest.

I look eagerly for your talking leaf in reply.

My heart is big for you,

(Sign Name.)

# DICTIONARY



A-1 Abandon, to throw away, to cast off, dislike.



A-2 Above, over



A-3 Across



A-4 Add to, increase



A-5 American, the emblem of the United States



A-6 Antelope, an animal of the prairie, fast runner



A-7 April, New Grass moon



A-8 August, Thunder moon



B-1 Baby, add signs for sex and size when needed



B-2 Bad, wrong, unjust, evil



B-3 Bear alive



B-4 Bear dead



B-5 Below, underneath



B-6 Between



B-7 Blanket or robe



B-8 Bone



B-9 Boy, male child



B-10 Brothers, companions, close friends



C-1 Call or come, to summon



C-2 Camp, headquarters, town, home



C-3 Campfire



C-4 Canyon



C-5 Clouds, mist, fog



C-6 Cold



C-7 Council, meeting, gathering, conference



C-8 Crazy, foolish



D-1 Day, time of sunlight



D-2 Death, extinction of life



D-3 December, long night moon



D-4 Direction, to point out, to direct one's course



D-5 Discovery, to find, to come upon by seeking, to solve or explain



D-6 Dog, domestic animal

# DICTIONARY



E-1 Eat, to consume food



E-2 Evening, sunset



F-1 Famine, great scarcity of food



F-2 Fear, cowardice, fright, shy, distrust



F-3 February, Hunger moon



F-4 Food



F-5 Fight, war



F-6 Fish



F-7 Flower of the cactus, courtship



F-8 Friendship



G-1 Girl, female child



G-2 Go, make tracks, walk, depart



G-3—Goods, possessions



G-4 Grasp, seize, take, capture



G-5 Grass



G-6 Grieve, sorrow, mourn, cry



H-1 Happiness, Thunderbird, sacred bearer of happiness unlimited



H-2 Headdress, ceremonial dance, festivity



H-3 Hear, listen, attention



H-4 Heart, love, affection, courage



H-5 Hidden, concealed, lost



H-6 Hit, strike



H-7 Horse



H-8 House, place of abode, permanent home



H-9 Hungry, suffering from want of food



I-1 I or me, myself



I-2 Inspired, animated by the spirit



J-1 January, Snow moon



J-2 July, Heat moon



J-3 June, Rose moon



K-1 Knife



L-1 Lake, an inland body of water

# DICTIONARY



L-2 Letter, talking leaf



L-3 Life, state of being alive, in the flesh



L-4 Lightning arrow, swiftness



M-1 Man, white man indicated by hat



M-2 Man holding gun



M-3 Man



M-4 Man, wise man



M-5 Man, disabled



M-6 Many, heap



M-7 March, Crow moon



M-8 May, Planting moon



M-9 Meat, plenty of food



M-10 Medicine lodge



M-11 Morning, sunrise



M-12 Moon, night sun, bright light.



M-13 Mountain, high elevation



N-1 Negation, denial in general



N-2 Night, period of darkness



N-3 Nights, three indicated by number of circles



N-4 Noon, midday



N-5 November, Beaver moon



O-1 October, Falling Leaves moon



O-2 Old, age



P-1 Power, strength



P-2 Pray to the Great Mystery



P-3 Prisoners, held in custody, captive



R-1 Rabbit, small wild animal



R-2 Rain, plentiful crops



R-3 Ran, pursue



R-4 Ranger on horse-back



































R-5 Rattlesnake, defiance



R-6 Rest, repose, unemployed, inactive, sleep, not move



# DICTIONARY

	R-7 River, stream		S-14 Starvation, skeleton, very thin person
	R-8 Road, street, route, way, course		S-15 Stop
	R-9 Running water, constant life		S-16 Strong, powerful, well fortified, healthy
	S-1 Same tribe, same family, relatives		S-17 Sun, The Great Mystery
	S-2 See, look		S-18 Surprise, astonishment, sudden emotion
	S-R September, Hunting moon		S-19 Swastika, good luck
	S-4 Sick, ill, distaste, disgust		T-1 Talk together, conversation
	S-5 Sky, heavens		T-2 Talk intense, angry, resentful
	S-6 Sociability, friendliness, hospitality, visit, welcome		T-3 Time, days and nights
	S-7 Soldier, guide, ranger, policeman		T-4 Trail, path
	S-8 Singing, happiness, melodious voice		T-5 Three years, indicated by number of circles
	S-9 Snow		T-6 Through, in the midst of, among
	S-10 Speak, talk		T-7 Trade, exchange, buy and sell
	S-11 Spirit		T-8 Tree, more than one may denote forest
	S-12 Spirit of bad medicine, bad luck		W-1 Walk
	S-13 Star of morning, guidance		W-2 Wandering

## DICTIONARY



W-3 Weather clear



W-6 Woman



W-4 Weather stormy



W-5 Winter



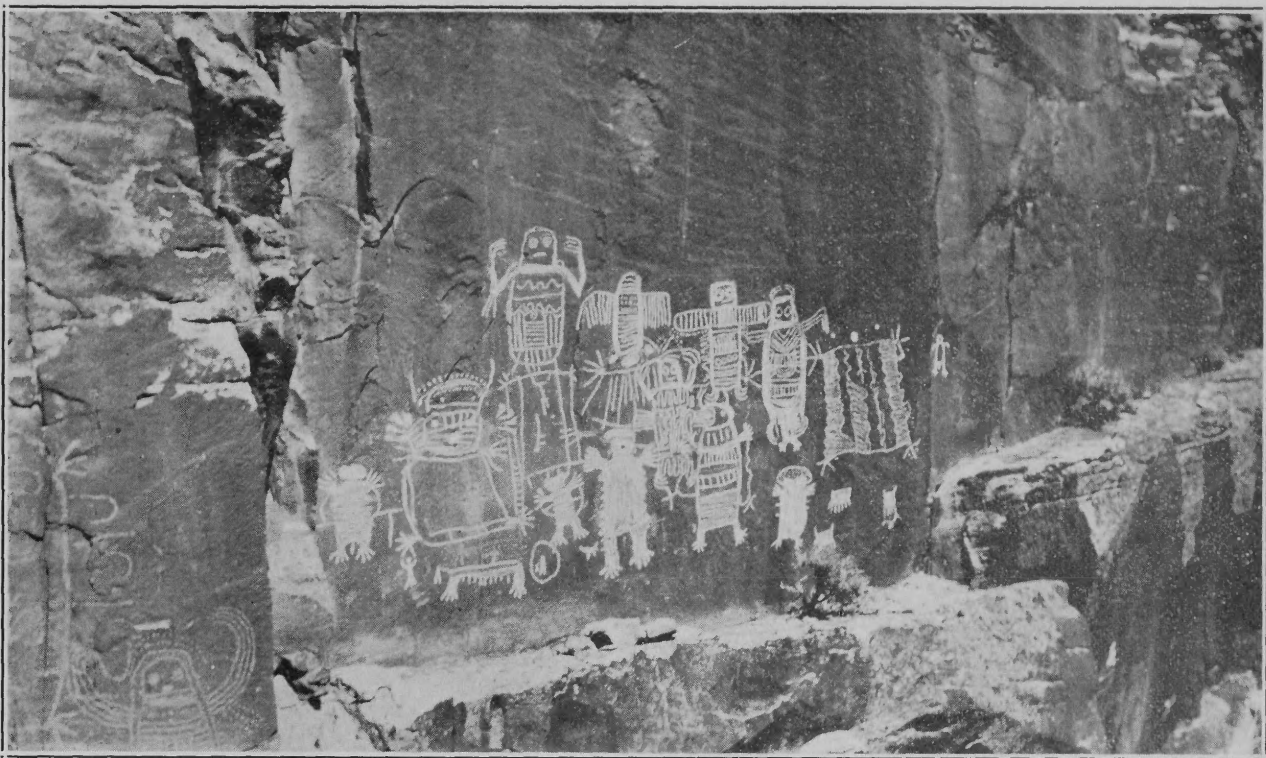
Y-1 Yell, shout

### A Letter in Indian Sign Writing

Those thoughts that are so feebly conveyed by words can be expressed, simply and beautifully, in Indian picture writing. Like the call of the infinite silence in the "great open spaces," a letter in sign writing will be understood, enjoyed and remembered. A strange fascination and thrill will come with writing or translating such a letter.

By the use of the sample letter on page 2, anyone can compose a similar letter, about that which they wish to write.





INDIAN SIGN WRITING ON UPPER DINWOODY

—Photo by M. M. Browne